C O R R E C T E D V E R S I O N

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into pre-service teacher training courses

Frankston – 23 April 2004

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Ms K. Wade, assistant principal;

Ms L. Donaldson, deputy senior student;

Mr T. Smith, director of computing;

Ms K. Taylor, cluster educator;

Mr D. Lyons, teacher;

Ms T. Hood, student;

Ms C. Jordan, student;

Mr G. Pyman, president, school council, Frankston High School;

Ms P. O'Connell, executive officer, Frankston-Mornington Peninsula Local Learning and Employment Network,;

Mr D. Zyngier, lecturer, faculty of education, Monash University;

Mr D. Collins, principal, Monterey Secondary College;

Mr T. Mirabella, retired primary school principal;

Mr M. Johnston, principal, Western Port Secondary College;

Mr R. Flanagan, principal, Overport Primary School; and

Ms M. Italiano, student engagement leader, Heatherhill Secondary College.

The CHAIR — I formally declare this meeting of the Victorian parliamentary Education and Training Committee open. I thank you very much for coming here today. This inquiry has been referenced from the Victorian Parliament to us to report back to it on the quality of our teacher education courses and on improvements and how we can get world best practice out of our teaching institutions to get the world's best teachers, to get the world's best students, I guess you would say. It is a major challenge for us which we are just beginning.

This is the very first time the committee has gone to a community forum like this. It is a different type of approach that we are adopting here. We came at the invitation of the member for Frankston, Alistair Harkness, who will say a few words. We are very hopeful that what we get out of here is more than just the input of professional groups but the input of people who live, breathe, work and study in education. Thank you for coming and I declare the meeting formally open.

I would also like to thank the students for the great lunch. We have been eating in the parliamentary dining room all this week, and I think it was a better quality than some of the meals I have had this week, so I thank the students.

I would also like to acknowledge the Hansard reporters who have the task of recording the proceedings and for us to use in our final report when we do it. I ask that each speaker who speaks, or when we get to an open discussion stage, if you could identify yourselves and your title, that would help the Hansard reporters who have a difficult job in terms of getting an accurate record of this meeting. Thank you.

Mr HARKNESS — Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Frankston, for those of you who are not from the area. My name is Alistair Harkness. I am the state member for Frankston, and it is an enormous pleasure to be able to stand here today with members and representatives of the Education and Training Committee meeting for the first time here in Frankston. It is a terrific initiative and, in my regular discussions with the chairman of the committee, I always sing the praises of Frankston High School, because it is a terrific school in the area.

Marion Heale, the principal, was telling me as we came in that this is the first official function to be held in this newly developed library on the junior campus of the school. If you look around you, you will see some of the innovation and some of the changes which are being implemented into school design, and we are seeing it first hand here today, which is a useful thing for members of the committee to observe.

Education is a very important thrust of the government. It is our no. 1 priority, and we are getting on with the job of making sure that we have not only well-resourced schools and terrific facilities but we are also making sure that our next generation of students are coming through equipped with the necessary skills to lead a productive lifestyle and to gain employment opportunities.

The discussions today are centred around pre-teacher training. It is something which is vitally important, and it is going to be very interesting to hear your views and to allow that feedback to go to the committee members in the preparation of their report. Once again I thank you for coming along. I thank the members of the committee for coming down to Frankston today and to each of you for attending. I would like to hand over now to the principal of Frankston High School, Marion Heale.

Ms HEALE — I would also like to welcome you here as members of the Frankston wider community. It is wonderful that you could come down here for this forum. We have a number of speakers and then we will have an open forum where you will all have the opportunity to participate. I am the first speaker today. We have been asked to make short presentation statements, so there will be a number of those following.

When I was first approached about contributing to the parliamentary committee, I welcomed opportunity because Frankston High School is such a big school, and we have a lot to say that I think is going to be very worth while. We have 123 teachers employed at the moment and 32 support staff. Our enrolment now has topped 1630 students, so it is a pretty big community. I have been involved with the staffing processes at the school for over 14 years so I have seen a lot of teachers come and go in that time. I would certainly like to say that the introduction of self-management into schools was a wonderful initiative. One of the main advantages of this was that it gave us the opportunity to employ our teaching staff to suit local needs. I think every school would say that that has been terrific.

At Frankston High School we take great pride in the excellence of our teaching staff, and we invest an enormous amount of time and energy into selecting the best possible teachers. I genuinely believe that teachers are the most valuable individual resource in schools. Research certainly shows that it is individual teachers who make the

difference in outcomes for students. We recruit teachers in a range of ways. Obviously the most significant is the employment of graduates, but we have on staff currently 14 teachers who have been teaching for less than two years. I can say they are all progressing well and some show really exceptional promise. They generally come to us well prepared.

Over the years we have developed quite a close relationship with Monash University, and you will hear from two of my staff today who lecture in the faculty of education at Monash. We take student teachers for teaching rounds from a range of institutions including, Ballarat University, Melbourne University, Deakin and RMIT, but obviously because of its geographic proximity Monash is our main point of contact. We also take student teachers from the USA as part of our international program. That is more an interns type of relationship. We also take student teachers from Japan because it fits in well with our language teaching programs.

When I am welcoming student teachers to the school I always point out that we are constantly on the lookout for new staff and if they show promise we may be in touch, and of course that is always an incentive for them. Currently I have eight teachers on the staff who have completed a teaching round at Frankston High School at some point. You may be interested in our selection criteria for staff new to the school. Always the selection criteria refers to successfully fostering a learning environment that takes into account the individual needs of students and the capacity to support the educational, emotional and welfare needs of students. We want teachers who have sound interpersonal and communication skills. That is always our top criteria. Teachers need to be able to relate to young people. Teachers create the climate for learning and for students to be academically engaged and prepared to face the challenges they are going to find in life. Teachers provide the interpersonal relationships that support the encouragement and the guidance that students need to maintain their motivation and to develop resilience.

I believe this student teacher relationship is critical in a number of ways. Students who believe their teacher is a caring one tend to learn more. Positive relationships with teachers predict enhanced social and language development in young children, and students' feelings of acceptance by teachers are associated with emotional and behavioural engagement in class. Teachers who support a student's autonomy tend to facilitate greater motivation, curiosity and the desire for challenge. Teachers higher in warmth tend to develop greater confidence in students. We want our teachers to provide a positive school and classroom environment in which high-quality teaching and learning is developed in a school culture that is supportive and optimistic. It is no longer sufficient to just transmit curriculum content and to develop skills and competencies. The big challenge is for teachers to be committed to engaging students in an ongoing way.

Our selection criteria also emphasise teamwork, the willingness to be involved with extracurricular activities and personal and professional growth. These qualities cannot all be learned at a teacher training institution. I think some of them are personal qualities that pre-service teacher training needs to emphasise to prospective teachers and provide adequate opportunities for trainees to work in schools with students to see if they are suited to the job. I am concerned that the student teacher practicum time in schools has been reduced in recent years. I think that is a big disadvantage. All young teachers I speak to emphasise how valuable is the practical time they have in classes in schools with students. In my experience the most academically successful graduates do not always make the best teachers. Teacher training institutions need to be more proactive in weeding out the student teachers who are clearly not suited to the job, because it is definitely a people skills job and not everybody who is looking to work in the area has those skills.

I would also like to comment on computer literacy as an important skill needed by teachers. It is another selection criteria for us, and we say that they need to demonstrate aptitude in the use and application of computer technology across the curriculum. Our teachers are expected to work in a high tech environment and model the effective use of computers across the curriculum. This is not always adequately addressed in pre-service teacher training. I know the committee is interested in supporting the entry of mature age students from other professions. We have five such teachers currently on staff. There is no doubt that we will need to promote this type of recruitment if some subject areas are going to survive in the curriculum — for example, food and wood and metal technology and information technology. The lunch that our students put on today may not happen in five years time because home economics teachers are not being trained like they used to be and we are finding them harder and harder to get.

We also have employed teachers who are mature age who then have to start at the bottom of the salary scale, and of course this often entails a big salary drop. It is a major disincentive for people coming in. I remember we employed one teacher from a highly paid job who was convinced he had a vocation to work with young people and turn their lives around, but he became very disillusioned once reality set in and he realised he was not able to make a

difference in individual students' lives and he went back to the corporate world very quickly. Some mature age teachers are looking for a more family friendly occupation and can be quite disappointed when they realise how demanding the workload of a teacher really is.

Change is one constant factor that we live with. As school leaders we often have to think strategically years ahead, particularly when we are recruiting, and we need teachers who can educate children for their futures. Teachers need to be forward thinking, educating children to face a world that may not exist when they leave school. I have always admired Roland Barth's definition of a school:

> A school is four walls surrounding the future.

If we are to continue to provide the best for our young people, we need teachers who can multitask, deal with unpredictable situations and build strong relationships. We need teachers who can continue to learn and grow through their career. This is going to be the best for our successive generations of young people. That is my statement.

The next person who is going to make a statement is Don Collins, principal of Monterey Secondary College. Welcome, Don. Monterey is another secondary school in our network.

Mr COLLINS — One of the easiest things is to go 'ditto' to what Marion said. It is a really succinct description of probably what we all face and what we all think about what needs to happen. I am going to try and précis some of the notes I made and some of the thoughts. Just a little bit about my background: I have actually taught in remote schools, rural schools and metropolitan schools, from the Mallee all the way through to East Gippsland back into Melbourne. All that time I have been involved in some shape or form with student teachers and just recruiting teachers. So I have a fair sort of swipe of what it is like in a number of contexts. Especially for our country colleagues, it is hard to staff schools and they make it even harder to attract student teachers and the right sort of student teacher who is suited to a rural environment.

I guess all schools are after teachers who can come in and actually relate to kids. We work very much on the premise of that interpersonal that Marion spoke about of people who have those skills to actually relate to kids and are able to relate to the subject matter, to be able to deliver the pedagogy in a way in which it is real and does relate to the kids everyday life. Amongst that relationship concept, in the context of being able to connect those so things, is for it to be raw as well. It is a sad day in our schools when we find that some people still walk into their classroom and say, 'Take out your textbooks, open up at page 32 and take down the following notes'. If that is happening, that is a really sad indictment on us. One of the things that happens, I guess, is that under stress teachers revert back to a style of teaching, that they themselves suffered when they were at school. One of the objects of the game, I think, is to try to make sure that does not happen.

In fact we need to make sure that the pre-service training finds the right people who can be shown how to deliver pedagogy that is in the knowledge-age basis. We like to throw the clichés around about the knowledge age rather than the industrial age. One of the great challenges we have in schools is that the physical structure of schools means that we are still in an industrial model and any change that we try to bring about has to happen within that context. We are in a factory, and we try very hard to break down the sausage factory, if you like, and try to change it as much as we can to now a different sort of pedagogy to take place. What we need are new teachers coming in who understand that new style of pedagogy, who are not getting anywhere near a textbook but are first establishing what do the kids first know, what is the prior knowledge, and how can I in fact value add to that knowledge within the context of my teaching and learning?

Years ago, I guess, when I was student, we had very much defined boundaries — and maybe not all that long ago there were defined boundaries in terms of what a person could teach. I would argue that first of all we need people who understand about teaching and learning in general before they worry about whether they are a teacher of maths or a teacher of English or science. When we are looking for candidates to come and work at Monterey Secondary College we say, 'First of all, we are interested in you as a person. What do you have to offer as a person, then as an educator and then as a teacher of any particular key learning area?'. I do not think we are any different from any other school in the state — we are all looking for people who can work outside any notional boundaries. Because you do not know what you have in the classroom, and you need to find out who is in the classroom and what their needs are and then adjust the pedagogy and the content so that it actually suits those kids and value adds to them.

Like Frankston High School, and I guess a lot of schools, we take a wide range of Dip. Ed. or B. Ed. students, and we take some people from overseas too. I have actually taught in some places overseas. I guess I would argue schools are schools and staff are staff and kids are kids all over the world — they have the same sort of needs. Some people come into Dip. Ed and B. Ed courses who are suited and some people do not. Sometimes the people who come in should be amongst that group of people who do not. They are not necessarily suited to teaching but they are still into the system. If I were to be really risqué in my comments, I guess I would be saying that every school has some people in it and you would say, 'Really, it would be better off if you weren't teaching'. But we have to deal with that too, and we spend an awful lot of time, of course, working with those people, to get the right sort of outcomes.

We just had some people from Wisconsin at our school. It was interesting that of those people half of them in fact were not really suited, did not have a good time and were homesick. Other people were fantastic, and you go, 'Yes, you're the sort of people who should be working in schools and working with our kids to get the right sort of outcome'. So it does not change, perhaps, wherever we are in the world.

Like Marion, I think, yes, greater exposure — more time in schools, more rounds, some way of finding time to get those students to really get a sense of what it is to be a teacher. When I ask my first years in terms of, 'Okay, you're in the barrel now. What did you need to know last year that you did not know this year?', you get a bit of a mixed response, I guess. Some of the list includes, 'Well, I actually didn't realise I was going to have to deal with parents'; 'I didn't realise I was going to have to write some letters home or make the phone calls'; 'I didn't know much about some of the report-writing strategies I needed'; 'I didn't know enough about some of the classroom-management strategies that I should have known about'. This is a generalisation because some of them did. Some of the courses are doing a great job, and it is dependent upon the student.

One of the other factors was, 'It's the time'. The amount of time it takes to actually be good in the classroom — especially when you are starting out — is extensive. I started teaching in the Mallee, and I remember coming home after a day in the heat in the school and I would have a nap on the floor straight away because you were wrung out by the whole process. It is about trying to prevent those students better for: this is what it is really going to be like. One of my newies said, 'Well, some of my friends are ready to get out already. They didn't know what it was going to be like'. Really, now you have to wonder about that, in one way, but that is the sort of feedback that their mates are giving: 'I'm getting out because it's too hard', or, 'I thought it was going to be really easy'. Interesting comment.

On the upside, there is that notion of my first years saying, 'We've come into a school and an environment' — I generalise across all the schools — 'where there is a lot of support' for them. There are a lot of people to talk to and help them through. We all know it is on the job, that is what you get, and you have to muddle around and stumble about in the dark and you're away. I guess this inquiry is perhaps about trying to minimise that darkness and trying to keep it a little more illuminated. I guess my hope is that the people are taking the courses in fact can find that relevance to schools and ensure that they are always connecting back into what is really happening on the ground and listening to the people who have just left and maybe for them to come back to the pre-service kids to say, 'Well, this is what it was really like for me'. I will stop there.

Ms HEALE — Our next speaker is David Lyons. David is one of our young teachers, so he is speaking on behalf of our youth. He travels every day from Essendon to get to Frankston High, which I think is pretty amazing. This is his second year, so he was here last year.

Mr LYONS — If I were to ask 100 educators from across Victoria what they thought needed to be improved in pre-service teacher training, I would get 100 different responses. I begin by saying this because I want to point out and highlight that what I have to say today is basically my experience and my opinion. However, it is my recent progression through pre-service teacher training at Monash University and subsequent employment at Frankston High that have allowed me to participate in today's forum. I am here today to discuss with you my experiences while undertaking my pre-service teacher training and, most importantly, whether I feel that this course provided satisfactory knowledge and experience for a graduate teacher to be successful in the 21st century.

The average teacher is a facilitator of learning, a mediator of disputes, a negotiator of curriculum and a director of the play called 'Class'. These are just some of the roles and responsibilities required of your normal teacher. Today I will suggest that teaching is practical in its nature; therefore, teachers must possess the personal qualities and communication skills required to fulfil the many roles they take on each time they step inside the classroom.

Unfortunately a pre-service teacher training course cannot teach these qualities; therefore, universities must improve the selection process which allow enrolment into education courses. The selection process must ensure that an applicant possesses the personal qualities required to become a successful teacher. The selection process may include an interview and a required reference from a principal or previous teacher as well as the satisfactory ENTER score and other prerequisites already in place. If the correct applicants are not selected for a course, then the quality of the course becomes irrelevant.

When considering personally my education course and how well that prepared me for teaching in the 21st century, there are several positives and negatives that I can relate. To demonstrate let me first go into some detail about my experiences within the pre-service teacher training course offered at Monash University. As I mentioned, I began a double degree of bachelor of arts and bachelor of education at Monash University. That took me four years to complete. At its conclusion I was to become a secondary schoolteacher qualified to teach psychology and S.O.S.E. This course was designed so that you can complete the required arts and education components concurrently, and it is only in the final year of the course that you begin to focus solely on education, including both practicum and course work. The course is supposedly a delicate balance of theoretical and practical experiences. However, I believe there is too much emphasis on the theory at the expense of the practical.

The practical component of the course allowed me to complete 80 days of practicum across six different schools, including both primary and secondary. The practical component also included two method area subjects in which I was taught the strategies to be able to teach psychology and S.O.S.E. It was perhaps this range of practical experiences that was the most rewarding aspect of my course. These experiences were made even richer by the fact that I was able to observe and teach at six different schools over four years, and I had experiences within state primary schools, state secondary schools, one with only 300 students and one of the worse truancy rates in the state, and the same time one of the most prestigious and expensive independent schools. This progression of experience allows pre-service teachers to be eased into the education system. My experience first began with a five-day observation block in a primary school and gradually built up over the years to conclude with a five-week teaching practicum in a secondary school.

To further improve on the practical experience of the teachers, the education system must look to other professions for guidance. There are very few professions where a graduate will begin their job single-handedly on the first day of work. A graduate teacher is expected to walk into the classroom alone on day 1 at a new school with new teachers and with new students and begin their career. Surely this process is flawed in that the system offers little support for beginning teachers. For example, the legal profession offers a year of articles where a graduate is assigned to a supervisor who assists and oversees the graduate's work and development. The supervising lawyer is there for guidance, training, and support, and it is only after a clerkship of 12 months that the graduate lawyer is then admitted to practise. In addition to teaching practicums that are already in place, the education system could look to a similar internship for graduate teachers. This internship would involve a graduate teacher being paired with a leading teacher, where they could observe and learn from the more experienced mentor. This would take place in a school in which the graduate is going to begin their career and would take place over a substantial period of time, either 6 or 12 months. It would ensure that a graduate has the opportunity to master their teaching practices while under the guidance of an experienced mentor in their place of future employment.

Unfortunately university courses focus on the theoretical basis of education — the latest research by experts in the fields, the latest theories from academics and the latest new approach to education from America. The theoretical component of the bachelor of education from Monash University that I undertook was made up of over 16 subjects, such as perspectives on learning, beyond the classroom, language and literacy, adolescent development and professional issues. Each of these subjects offered a variety of theoretical approaches to teaching and learning. Unfortunately, though, pre-service teacher training tends to focus upon the theory and not the practical application of such knowledge. Teachers need to know how the research and theories can translate into their classroom teaching.

For example, one of the most common theories related to learning which is taught in all pre-service teacher training courses is Gardner's multiple intelligences. This theory suggests that different individuals have preferred learning styles which promote and lead to a more successful learning experience for that particular individual. It is suggested that teachers must offer a broad range of learning activities to cater for each of these individuals and their preferred learning styles. Whilst this knowledge is undoubtedly valuable, graduate teachers require practical examples of how to effectively apply this model to their everyday classroom. One of the most important aspects of modern teaching is designing learning tasks to cater for the unique needs of students. Whilst as university I undertook a

subject that was looking at the integration and inclusion of students with learning difficulties and special needs. I presumed that I could come away from the subject with strategies and methodologies to cater for students with individual needs. Unfortunately I spent the entire year looking at how important it was to include students and why inclusion is a better model than integration.

In a similar circumstance I enrolled in an elective subject entitled digital literacy. What I expected was a range of strategies and examples of how to effectively use technology to enhance my regular teaching. However, I spent the entire semester discussing the importance of technology and the research into the use of technology. These examples highlight the fact that modern day teachers need practical examples of learning tasks that allow for students with different learning styles and special needs, not only the theory and the research that underlies these tasks.

The question we are here today to discuss in its simplest form is: do pre-service teacher training courses meet the needs of teachers and the education system in the 21st century? As you have heard, I believe there are several reforms which are needed to ensure that the best possible teachers graduate from the pre-service teacher training courses. That is the aim, after all.

In summary, these reforms include better preselection of students, a graduate mentoring program for beginning teachers and, most importantly, a redesign of courses so that they focus on the practical application of the theoretical knowledge. If these reforms are implemented in pre-service teacher training courses, then the quality of graduating teachers will undoubtedly increase. These modifications to the pre-service teacher training will not only assist those graduating teachers, but will also create a snowball effect and will eventually improve the standard, the professionalism and the respect of the teaching vocation. Thank you.

Ms HEALE — We will now ask Travis Smith to hop his way forward. He is on crutches today having injured his ankle at basketball last night. Travis is one of our young leading teachers. Usually a leading teacher is someone who has been in teaching a long time. Travis has been teaching for six years at two different schools, and he is also lecturing at the faculty of education at Monash University in the principles of psychology teaching.

Mr SMITH — First of all, my name is Travis Smith. I am the director of computing here at Frankston High School. I am also a lecturer at Monash University in the psychology method.

Let me begin by saying that I think the current system has many positive points, although I am going to give my opinion on a few changes which I think could enhance the quality of teachers emerging from these courses and therefore improve the quality of the education that they offer their students. Having been trained at Monash University in 1997 through the diploma in education course, and now being a lecturer with Karen Wade, who you will hear from shortly, in the psychology method, I feel qualified to make some comments on the state of the courses on offer.

One of the first things I would say is that there is a very strong theoretical component to the Dip. Ed. course which was primarily discussion-based sessions relating to the research and theories regarding education. Feedback from my fellow students in 1997 and also my current students at Monash University highlighted that these students see that it is a necessary component of becoming a good teacher. However, far too much time is spent on this rather than the more practical aspects of teaching. I would certainly not dispose of the theoretical components of this course but trim them down and focus more on the practical things such as teaching and learning strategies and classroom discipline — procedures necessary for their teaching round and beyond their teaching round.

I think the contents of the pre-service courses also need to include a strong technology component which is currently lacking in some of the courses available. A revamping of the main contents covered in the courses and restructuring of the teaching round system would also benefit the courses, as I will discuss later.

This brings me to offer three main suggestions for pre-service teacher training. Firstly, as I alluded to earlier, I think that the contents covered in the bachelor of education and the diploma of education courses needs to be reworked, allowing more practical and less theoretical components. As a compromise, the theoretical components could be partially taught via a correspondence method with students reading and reflecting on current research in non-contact time, leaving the more valuable face-to-face lectures and tutorial sessions to cover practical concepts such as the use of information communication technology to teach any concept.

I could parallel this to the way I and the other year 12 psychology teachers at Frankston High School run our classes. We know that there is too much information to cover fully in classes, so there is a responsibility on students to do the background reading; note-taking; chapter summaries; comprehension questions at home, allowing our valuable class time to be utilised in discussing their learning, talking through concepts to allow for self-referencing, and playing games or activities which give the students episodes on which they can pin their knowledge of the topic. I would have benefited from a similar approach to the use of my time during my Diploma of Education course.

In my psychology method class that Karen and I currently run at Monash University we spend three hours modelling teaching and learning experiences to the students that we run with our own classes in school every day. This not only gives them a first-hand experience of the activities, it allows them to see how to run the activity and reflect on the benefits of the task after it has finished. The feedback we receive from them is that it is one of the most beneficial classes they attend, due to the wealth of ideas and strategies they get which are directly linked to the Victorian certificate of education (VCE) curriculum. I also think that the students enjoy our classes. Karen and I are both practicing teachers with an intimate knowledge of the ways schools currently run, and we can share our day-to-day experiences with them. They like to hear real stories about the way we have dealt with certain situations in our classes, and they benefit from these experiences.

I am not suggesting that only current teachers should be lecturing in pre-service teaching courses, because there are many university staff who have far more knowledge and teaching experience than I have. However I do think that Karen and I can easily engage our students, as they know that our strategies are tested and challenged each and every day in the classroom.

The second suggestion I would like to make for pre-service teaching courses is a slight change to the way teaching rounds currently operate. Having been fortunate enough to visit England recently to look at schools in the United Kingdom, I noticed that some of the schools were setting themselves up as training institutes where students could spend a year in the school and complete all of their theoretical and practical work under the supervision of a member of staff in that school. Naturally, the school received funding from both the government and private companies that they had established relationships with, and this afforded teaching staff the time to mentor these student teachers.

Feedback from the school I visited where this was the case was that the student teachers were more than prepared for everything that the school environment might throw at them because of their vast experiences in every facet of the profession. Instead of the artificial three to five-week teaching rounds currently in place at many universities here, perhaps we need to look at a similar program which would benefit all involved and give student teachers a sense of belonging and ownership of the classes they teach, rather than being thrown into someone else's class for a few weeks where establishing a relationship and a rapport with students is almost impossible.

The third and final suggestion that I would make to improve pre-service teacher training courses relates directly to part 3 of the terms of reference to the Education and Training Committee which states, if you have not already heard it. The committee is to:

(b) iii. determine the skills and knowledge required of teachers, and therefore of pre-service teacher training courses, in response to reflect the changing nature of education in the 21st century.

It is undeniable that the prevalence of technology in schools and the use of information and communications technology (ICT) has changed greatly in the past 10 to 15 years. My question to universities is simple. Have the teacher training courses evolved as significantly as the schools and classrooms have over the past 10 or 15 years in the use of technology in teaching and learning? My experience tells me that the answer to this questions is, 'No, they have not'. Even while I was studying at Monash University in 1997, Frankston High School was in its third year of running a laptop program for students. Being now in charge of this program as the director of computing, I have a vested interest in seeing graduate teachers emerge from pre-services courses with at least some of the skills necessary to teach in a dynamic laptop environment.

The problem lies with access to such training in the university courses currently on offer. A few years ago I was lecturing at the university and told my students to make sure they signed up for the computer courses that were on offer through the university. I was shocked to hear that they were unaware of any courses, as none were being offered. Upon asking the person in charge of the Diploma of Education course about these sessions, I was told that

funding was not available to run these courses for students. I know that the situation has changed slightly since, although I still have concerns about the nature of the sessions that are currently being offered.

Much research into professional development and the use of technology for teachers has been conducted, and I would like to quote a few statistics from the 1999 Education Week national survey of teachers' use of digital content. Upon asking the question: 'If you do not use CD ROMs, web sites and software for instructing students, why not?', the top two reasons were as follows: 71 per cent of those who did not use the technology cited a lack of available computers in classrooms. I am pleased so say the department of education has gone some of the way to addressing this problem through the Bridging the Digital Divide funding provided to schools in the last year, with this school receiving 49 new computers for student use. The second reason cited was that there was not enough time to try out software or prepare web sites for students to use. The time to play and explore with technology is probably always going to be an issue until more funding is made available to schools to reduce the contact hours for teachers without some sort of new innovation to implement with that funding.

I propose that as a key component of every university pre-service teaching course students should be allowed time to explore the vast range of technologies available to them and expose them to the best strategies for the use of technology in teaching and learning. This would be achievable if, as per my first suggestion, the nature of the pre-service course content changed. Even a one-year Dip Ed course has time for the exploration and development of skills relating to the use of ICT which research suggests that teachers in the job simply do not have time to focus on.

Incidentally, the lowest two reasons that teachers cited for not implementing these strategies were, 'That there are not enough quality and relevant products available' and, 'It is not the best way to help students master skills'. This demonstrates to me that teachers know that there are products available and they know that the use of ICT will enhance learning for their students, but they do not have the time to learn the software or create the resources for their classes. Both of these things could be done in pre-service teacher training courses.

The type of ICT-based courses that I have seen taught in universities are also questionable in their nature. Research shows that teachers benefit most from professional development experiences using ICT that are related directly to the courses being taught rather than skills-based learning. What this means is that instead of offering courses on how to use PowerPoint, we need to focus on strategies to enhance teaching and learning for students by getting them to use PowerPoint to explore a concept. For example, in my year 8 geography class, students do not use PowerPoint for presenting, they use it to make animations of the water cycle with their own recorded voice commentary of what is happening in the process. It is these types of cross-curricular strategies that teachers in training need to be exposed to and be aware of so that they can use the technology in schools, and they have more to do than simply word processing and researching via the Internet.

So in answer to part three of the terms of reference that '... the committee is to determine the skills and knowledge required of teachers, and therefore of pre-service teacher training courses to reflect the changing nature of education in the 21st century' I suggest that my experiences of the limited skills-based ICT training do not train teachers effectively for the 21st century classrooms. It seems astonishing to me that much of the course that I went through in 1997 only prepared me to teach in the classroom prior to the Internet and the problems of technology in our society, not the one which is the current reality. Pre-service training courses need to implement ways of providing effective training of teachers to enhance learning for students through the meaningful use of technology, and I know that there would already be some courses trying to address this very issue.

In conclusion, I believe that pre-service teacher training needs to change in three main ways: more practically based courses with greater focus on the experiences in the classroom, a longer internship-style organisation of teaching practicum preferably based in schools, and a much stronger focus on teaching and learning using ICT so that students can learn in schools the very same way that they learn outside of school — in a technology-rich environment.

Ms HEALE — Charlotte is one of our year 10 students and when I invited her to speak she said, 'Thank you for this opportunity', which I thought was pretty impressive. She is going to tell us a little bit about what she thinks about teachers.

Ms JORDAN — I am a year 10 student at Frankston High School. My name is Charlotte Jordan. When I first arrived in Australia at the age of 11 it was interesting to see the difference in the number of teachers there were

and how their way of teaching differed. Coming from England I was used to very traditional methods of teaching, and with class sizes ranging from 27 to 35 children. Some of us found it difficult to get the one-on-one help that we needed.

It was also rather uncommon to find a teacher who was less than 25 years old because people believed that to do well in this field you needed experience which would only come from training and teacher assistance. As a result I found it a surprise how different it was when I came to Australia, and I really do believe we are lucky in the sense of how many teachers we have working in Australia and how much space we have to make that wonderful learning environment.

But one of the main things I noticed was how many younger teachers we have in Australia and how early you can begin working at schools. Since being at Frankston High School I have been taught by a wide variety of teachers, each with their own views on the best way to teach students. I have found that the younger teachers, due to not having much experience in the classroom, had to rely on training to approach the most efficient way of teaching a class. As a result they were sometimes taken advantage of because of their lack of experience while students found that the learning environment was slightly distracted or disruptive, and no students should be expected to learn properly in this situation.

To improve this I believe we should offer teachers more hands-on training and experience before setting out to work as an independent teacher. A very effective way to gain experience, which is already used as part of teacher training, is to become a student teacher and assist in the classroom. This method is a great insight into what to expect as a teacher and in my opinion cannot be used enough. The more hands-on experience in the classroom we have will only help us later on as a teacher. I truly believe that people learn best from experience, actions and sometimes even from their mistakes, the bottom line being that what teachers learn through training can and should be put into practice as much as possible before reaching their goal as a teacher.

From a student's point of view, a good teacher is someone who is open to new ideas and change, willing to explain or help and, regardless of how old or young they are, has the desire to teach students in the best way they can. Thank you.

Ms HEALE — I now introduce Kate Taylor. Kate has a complicated background. She is currently the educator for the Frankston cluster of schools — the innovation and excellence cluster — so she represents and works in four local primary schools and Frankston High School. She has also had experience as a curriculum consultant at the regional office and has been a leading teacher at Frankston High School prior to that.

Ms TAYLOR — Thanks, Marion. That is the Kate Taylor introduction done. I am very pleased to have been invited to address this group today. My role as innovation and excellence educator for the Frankston Federation of Schools has enabled me to work with teachers to explore ways of doing things differently in order to best meet the needs of our students as they move towards that looming unknown future. My work has given me the opportunity to help teachers reflect on their practice and to consider alternative ways of working. So what are the needs of students heading for that unknown future?

I recently reviewed a few articles which discussed the skills and attributes which will be needed by students as they move from school to become effective contributors to our future world. Descriptors I encountered indicated that our students will need to be able to evaluate the effectiveness of ideas, information and actions, prioritise actions, process information, reason arguments, set and achieve goals and targets, transfer knowledge and use their initiative. Furthermore, they should be adaptive, have developed broad scientific skills, be caring, civic-minded, committed, competent in a variety of communication skills, creative, culturally aware, enterprising, enthusiastic and flexible. They should have high levels of integrity and honesty and be innovative, metacognitive problem solvers who are able to think critically, creatively and laterally. Well-developed interpretive skills and the capacity to be lifelong learners, and technological competence, you will be pleased, Travis, were also seen as essential attributes. Naturally it was also stated that students should be highly numerate and literate in a multitude of areas, able to work cooperatively in teams and be effective strategic planners. Students were expected to have developed the capacity to be loyal, organised, resilient, resourceful, responsible, self-confident, self-reliant, self-respecting, socially competent, tolerant and vocationally prepared. One writer even suggested they should be well educated! So this is what is expected of our year 12 graduates.

What qualities do we need to ensure our teachers have in order to be able to nurture such skills and attributes in our students? Teachers need to be able to allow students to participate in decision making and have a say in decisions that affect them. They need to ensure that their students feel they are valued members of the school community. They need to provide a learning environment in which students feel safe to explore and take risks. They should be equipped to provide curriculum content which is personalised and relevant to student needs so that students have the chance to learn effectively. They should be placing a high priority on building positive relationships between students and their work, students and their peers, students and their community, students and their teachers, but the relationship aspects do not end there. Students also benefit from an environment in which their teachers work cooperatively to plan pedagogically perfect programs for their prodigies. Research has shown that children who are well connected to their families and to their schools have more positive life experiences. They achieve better educational outcomes and are less likely to leave school early, to suffer from ill-health, to use drugs or to commit crime. Children who do not feel connected to their school rate more highly against almost any measure of risk and more lowly against any measure of protective factors. Successful teachers provide opportunities for active rather than passive learning and help students develop their skills in focusing information-gathering, remembering, organising, analysing, generating, integrating and evaluating information.

Successful teachers ensure that students feel welcome at school, know their students well, respect them and ensure that students are treated fairly and are listened to. They recognise and cater for each student's individuality, originality and personality. Innovative teachers engage their students by providing interesting and challenging activities which are academically rigorous and will also ask students for feedback on their performance. They use assessment processes which are both developmental and authentic and generally negotiate these with students. Effective teachers encourage student participation in curriculum development, understand different learning styles and give consideration to cultural factors in their learning. Successful teachers create an inclusive and participatory environment for students and support the development of a culture of innovation and the capacity for innovation in their students. Inclusive and participatory practices give students a chance to express their views, gain new skills and contribute to their world. Teachers who connect with and enthuse their students make a substantial difference to the quality and extent of student learning. Effective teachers pay particular attention to aligning curriculum assessments and pedagogy and ensure that the nature of assessment encourages an approach which stimulates and supports lateral thinking.

If teachers are to achieve success in educating students, learning spaces must be enjoyable, inspiring and challenging places which instil in students an understanding of the benefits of education and an interest in the subject and topics being taught. Effective teachers enjoy working in a deprivatised environment in which they regularly work in a professional action learning team rather than in the highly privatised, almost competitive environment that many schools experience.

In my work with the teachers across the Frankston Federation of Schools, and in my previous role of middle years project officer for the southern metropolitan region, I have been very fortunate to work with a wide range of teachers who have been passionate about their work and eager to find ways to improve their pedagogical practices. I am very proud to have two children — a son who is in his second year of teaching and a daughter who is currently studying in her fourth year of a teacher training course — and it is these experiences that have informed the following comments: current pre-service teacher training courses take a variety of approaches to preparing their students for life in the teaching profession. The most effective courses are those in which students have been encouraged to experiment with a wide range of productive pedagogies and in which the focus has been on the process of learning rather than on the content associated with the subject to be taught. I have been surprised and indeed a little disappointed that many graduate teachers have never seen or used a graphic organiser, have no idea what a mind map is, have not had the opportunity to really explore and develop their understanding of learning styles and have not been exposed to recent brain research. Many of them lack confidence in the area of assessment; find classroom management issues to be daunting; do not really have an understanding of how schools operate; and say that their practicums have not been long enough — a resounding theme, there, isn't it? — to enable them to build rapport with the staff and students in the school. Many beginning teachers have commented to me that a real understanding of their chosen profession did not occur until after they graduated and actually started working as a teacher.

The current climate in government schools is one in which teachers are encouraged to develop innovative ways of working with students who are very different from the creatures who existed in classrooms even 10 years ago. Pre-service teacher training courses need to ensure that their student teachers have maximum experience inside the classroom so that they can develop their understanding of the pedagogical practices that support the learning

outcomes needed for the knowledge society. Graduate teachers need to have developed a deep understanding of processes such as how to negotiate curriculum activities, pathways and assessment tasks with students; how to plan real world activities that require complex thought and allow time for exploration; how to develop critical literacies, problem solving and research skills in their students; effective ways of incorporating community activities in curriculum; how to develop their students' ability to think, not to follow; and an understanding of the importance of innovation and enterprise.

They must have developed their skills in practices that strengthen both student teacher-student relationships and the challenge of learning. They have to have developed skills that are based on a constructivist method of learning and which include processes involving cooperation, communication and social competencies generally and that provide for individual differences in interest, achievement and learning styles. In my view, pre-service teacher training courses generally develop students' understanding of the theories behind effective pedagogy but they need to spend more time supporting their students as they explore more ways of transferring their theoretical knowledge into successful classroom practice.

Ms HEALE — Thank you. Now for a bit of a change of pace I am going to introduce Glen Pyman. Glen is a parent at our school and this year was elected school council president. I am sure he envisaged he would be addressing a parliamentary committee at some time.

Mr PYMAN — That was Marion speaking; now it is time for the ill informed and naive to get up and say something, so here I am. Part of the Frankston High School vision is to help all students become lifelong learners. In doing this, students are prepared by teachers for their roles in adult life, not only for their roles in the work force but as constructive members of society. It seems to me that the more successful teachers separate themselves from the rest by their ability to make curriculum subject matter relevant not only to the students' current and probable future life experiences but also to likely future vocations and interests.

In talking to a cross-section of secondary students from a variety of schools, both public and private, one recurring theme is that good teachers think like us. This tells me that teachers who connect with students are able to see the world from an adolescent's point of view and are able to communicate subject matter in a way that relates to situations in which the young person has an interest or is likely to have experienced in some form or other. We all appreciate that kids today are under different pressures than when many of us were that age and are probably more worldly than us in comparison. They probably do not respond in the same way as we did. While I do not pretend to know the extent of training that student teachers receive in this regard, my impression from my discussions with kids is that the majority of trainee teachers need more help to make them understand what makes kids of today tick, what their needs are and why they react and respond in the way they do.

The second point arises from observations of results achieved by my own and other children of friends and acquaintances. These outcomes are optimised when the relevance of the practical application and the use of subject matter or extensions of subject matter can be conveyed to students. For example, my older daughter is currently studying year 11 Japanese. She had an average interest in the subject and this has been transformed into a passion by a teacher who has lived and worked in Japan for several years and has accompanied a number of students, including my daughter, on a two-week visit to Frankston High School's sister school near Tokyo. She has been able to teach with authority, illustrating the real benefits of proficiency in the language with such a powerful effect that my daughter now seeks out Japanese contemporary music, is actively considering how she might study in Japan, and keenly corresponds with her host's sister who will be visiting later this year.

I doubt if she would have been continuing with the subject if not for the innate skills of her current teacher. It is also illustrated by the abilities of some outdoor education teachers with whom I have had contact. Those who were involved as practitioners of a particular sport or outdoor activity, or maybe volunteers in an outdoor-oriented recreational club seemed to be able to motivate students to participate to their full potential and get them to partake of an activity outside the school environment and ours with great enthusiasm to the extent that their achievements rival or surpass those from supposedly better resourced schools.

Risk management has become a mantra in most walks of life. Most students can cope with the teaching that is dry and remote to an extent but there are some who are at extreme risk of prematurely dropping out and becoming disenchanted or even worse. Some powerful lessons can be learned from the teaching practices in the hands-on learning program here at Frankston High School, where those at risk are provided with targeted education which is

absolutely relevant to the future aspirations of those potential dropouts. This program could not succeed without teachers who have the capabilities of which I speak.

It seems to me that a high-school graduate of 18 who then immediately goes on to complete a four-year degree to graduate as a teacher is not really fully equipped to help all students become lifelong learners. I would propose that pre-service teacher training contain a vocational element in addition to the teaching rounds that we have heard people talk about today. These students should complete part of this vocational training as part of their degree. This element could be in an area in which an undergraduate is majoring, for example, an undergraduate English teacher may undertake work experience as a journalist for several months as part of their course; a science teacher could undertake training in an engineering organisation for a short time, and so on. Obviously some subsidy arrangement would need to be in place to encourage this in the business world or utilities or other employers so that they would embrace such schemes, but this need not be such a huge problem as benefits would accrue to all parties.

We have been warned of looming labour shortages with the ageing population, and industries could easily be persuaded that by assisting in the training of teachers a potential flow-on of interest in that particular sector is more likely to follow in coming generations. I realise that there have been programs aimed at mature teachers in this area, but I do not believe it has been correctly targeted and is impractical to implement in sufficient numbers to be really effective. I think I recall these schemes being wound down or abandoned.

Accompanying this should be an effort to raise the profile and prestige of the teaching profession in order to make a success of the initiatives to attract people from other professions to become qualified teachers. I noticed on the Internet a report tabled in the Senate in 2002 that ranked teachers ninth in the list of most trusted professions, below ambulance officers and fire fighters, though, strangely enough, ahead of politicians who ranked 26th.

The CHAIR — Senators! You should never trust a senator!

Mr PYMAN — Ambulance paramedics, who are rightly held in high esteem in our community, perform life-saving work which touches, say, 5 per cent of the population. That is a guess of mine. Teachers undertake life-forming work which affects the whole community. It could be argued that they deserve to be ranked higher in the public's mind than they are. 'Excessive holidays, short working hours leading to a pretty comfortable life' are misconceptions that those who are in contact with the profession know to be fallacies. As in every walk of life there are probably those who do not contribute as much as others, but this is a problem for school management rather than teacher training, I would say. But the majority of hard-working teachers contribute more time and energy over the course of a year than, I think, many comparable professions, and generally for much less financial reward.

The teaching profession itself, I feel, must play a central role in raising the prestige by conducting itself as a professional association, but the quality of pre-service training, together with improved salary structures, are also major prerequisites. I think a prestigious, well remunerated profession would attract more sufficiently qualified and mature candidates. So, from an uneducated, naive, non-teacher those are a few points that I thought might improve the quality of teachers that we all value and appreciate in the world we live in.

Ms HEALE — We have two more speakers on the list. I would like to ask Ray Flanagan to come forward. Ray is the principal of Overport Primary School which is adjacent to Frankston High School and he is also president of the Frankston schools district — —

Mr FLANAGAN — The schools association or the network, yes. Thanks very much. Marion. First I want to begin by thanking the members of the Legislative Assembly for initiating this inquiry. I think that in my time as a principal it is the first one I have been associated with or in fact known of. I think it is fantastic, coming out and hearing the views of practitioners rather than getting it second-hand through representatives of various professional groups or political organisations professing to have the interests of the schools at heart. Good on you for that! I hope that continues. I think it is a very great initiative.

Regarding the matter at hand, I have several points to make, but I want to preface it by the fact that I am speaking from a primary perspective as chairperson of the Frankston network. We have about 27 primary schools that I sought views from before I came along here, but many of them are very similar to my own. No. 1 is the quality of graduates we are getting is sensational. I have employed eight over the last two years from various institutions, and our selection processes are very similar to Frankston's — very thorough,. We go to great lengths to make sure that we get the right people, but each one of the kids, as I call them — and at my age they are kids — who come out have a real commitment and dedication, great work ethic, a real desire to make a difference and, most importantly,

a love of kids and a desire to see them succeed. I think that is great. I think that is really terrific. But there are a few things I do have a concern with, and similarly do my colleagues.

The first is the intake selection. And here I want to tell you a little story about something that happened to me as principal of Overport, which is just over the road. At the beginning of 2002 I was approached by two gentlemen who wanted to become primary school teachers. They said to me, 'What do we have to do?'. I said, 'Come and work for me for nothing for a year and I will see what I can do about getting you in'. Both of them were tertiary qualified, of course. One had a degree in science and was formerly a cadet with BHP, who was now running a very successful business in Seaford making kayaks and surf skis. The other gentleman was from North America and he had had quite a great deal of experience in the armed services over there and had a string of degrees as long as my arm with the appropriate HDs et cetera accompanying them. They worked for me for around three terms. One guy scaled down his business to come and work for us for free. He only spent a limited amount of time with his business as he was scaling it down. The other guy had a night job and was working during the day with us.

It became obvious after a few weeks that one of them was very well suited to teaching. He immediately formed fantastic relationships with the kids, with other teachers, with parents, was there beyond and above the call of duty, took lunch time classes et cetera which was his thing; he went away on school camps et cetera. Let us just say the other bloke struggled — no relationships with the children, found it hard to relate to staff, came to teaching from purely an intellectual point of view. At the end of the year I wrote, as I was asked to do, recommendations for both of them.

With Cameron, the guy who did very well, the recommendation could be noted by its length. I do not think I have ever written a more glowing reference in my life. It was three or four pages long, bestowing the virtues of this bloke. With the second guy, I think the reference could be notable for its brevity. I think I wrote about five or six lines. It is what I left out, I think, that said everything about this guy. Now, come selection period, who got it? Our learned colleague from the United States. Who was left out? The bloke I had written the four-page reference for.

When I contacted the dean of the university that Cameron had applied for, the response that I got was, 'What do you expect us to do? We have lots of applicants. We select purely on academic qualifications, and that is all we are capable of doing'. To me they have potentially missed out on a fantastic teacher. He was just extraordinary in his natural ability. When I said, 'Why can't you instigate some interview process?', the story was, 'Okay. Limited funds'. All right, I can buy that, but why not? I am old enough to remember the early 1980s where as a young teacher I was involved in and sat on selection panels and vetted some of the applicants for teaching courses, and I thought that was a magnificent process and very cost effective. I think they possibly paid our school replacement money to release me onto these panels, but also gave practitioners a say in the selection of these people.

As far as Cameron is concerned, I will say there is a happy ending to the story. He did come back and work for me in 2003 and happily was accepted to another university at the end of the year. But how many other Camerons are there out there who have dipped out? He had a science degree, reasonable marks, was selected as a candidate for BHP. He was no dill and he ran a very successful private business. How many other Camerons are there out there who are missing out on one of the most important professions in the world?

As far as attracting suitable candidates from other professions, I am of the opinion — and I think somebody said it before — that the longer you stay in the profession, the greater the financial reward. If you are going to make the jump from one profession to another, being teaching, then there does need to be some financial incentive, and if you are going to start at the base level, there are not a lot of people who are going to be prepared to do that. Having said that, we have a couple of people on staff who have made that transition and recently joined us in the last two years. They have been absolutely sensational in the breadth of knowledge that they have brought to our staff, and Kate has personal experience with two of them, and she could bear me out on that.

Attracting more males is a real issue in primary education. We have a staff of about 40 people. Out of that, three people on staff are male, and I am one of them. When you consider the fact that a high percentage of our families are single parent families, the primary care giver being a woman, these kids coming to us need male role models. They are not getting them. Do I have an answer for that? No, I do not. But I think Glenn touched on it before. I think the profession has to take some sort of responsibility for that in promoting primary teaching as a fantastic occupation for males. I also think in the selection process there could be allowances made to encourage males to apply and to be accepted because we certainly need them. I do not think the problem is as significant in secondary, but in primary it certainly is. So that is one particular point.

As to student teacher placement strategies, some methods of teacher placement are just outmoded. In fact one university we deal with is using a similar style of approach to the one that I went through, and that was 30 years ago, and that is come out; it is a case of, 'Do your three-week training and then head back to uni'. In fact I got rung up by one of the lecturers who was coming out to visit some students that we have at the moment. He was coming out to assess these students, and he said, 'I will arrive at 1 o'clock. I will look at the four students between 1 and 1.30 and then I will speak to them between 1.30 and quarter to 2'. How in the hell he was going to make an assessment in that short time is absolutely beyond me, and I told him not to bother. He subsequently rang back and said he would extend the period of time. But these guys are coming out for three weeks, and they are third years, I think. They have a year to go. It is not enough time.

The point has been well made by other people, but I point out the initiatives by Victoria University. They run a project partnership type of an internship, and Melbourne University runs an internship, too, where people can come out and spend a term in a school. They are there at the start of the term for planning and they are there at the end of the term for evaluation. There is a mutual benefit because the school or class gets to use those people as an extra hand. They are not taking a Mickey Mouse, one-off lesson, but being involved in the real curriculum at the time. So I think we need to move towards that. Travis over there pointed out a few initiatives that are happening over in England, which I would applaud too.

With regard to what is learnt at university there is some doubt among my colleagues that students are being exposed to the techniques and syllabus consistent with those being used in primary schools at the moment. The lack of knowledge of these graduates on programs such as early years and middle years programs is astounding. These are significant programs that we are running in our school and we need our graduates to come in with fresh ideas and initiatives relating to those programs. But unfortunately we find that we have to skill them when they come into the school. That takes additional time that we do not have.

I think somebody made the point before that we are using some practising teachers to deliver programs. I would recommend that we extend that to practical examples. Practical examples of teaching need to be given to these young people rather than a concentration on theory.

In summary, the quality of students that we have been getting is fantastic. I am concerned about our university entry requirements, which are excluding some very good people. On-the-job training expectations for some universities are poor and have not changed in 20 or 30 years. I pose the question: are students being exposed to the techniques and syllabus currently being employed in Victorian schools; and could we be making more use of retired principals and teachers or practising principals and teachers in the selection process?

I will leave you with those points. I thank the committee once again for giving us that opportunity.

Ms HEALE — Our final presentation is from Ms Karen Wade. Ms Wade is one of our assistant principals; she runs the Victorian certificate of education (VCE) campus on the other side of the road; and she also lectures at Monash University on a range of subjects.

Ms WADE — I have had the privilege of being a secondary teacher for the past 17 years, and I love my job. For the past 13 years I have lectured sessionally in the graduate diploma and fourth-year bachelor of education courses at Monash University, Clayton campus, teaching mathematics method, principles of teaching, educational psychology, and for the past five years psychology method.

I have to admit that I get frustrated by some of the comments the media and other parties make about pre-service teacher training courses and the quality of graduates. I am very lucky to have experienced some excellent programs over the years and I believe the quality of the young graduates completing teacher training is very high. You only have to look at two of my former students, David and Travis, to realise the calibre of teachers we have entering the profession.

I would not be honest, however, if I did not say that there are some graduates completing teacher training who probably should never have been teachers because they just do not have the personal attributes needed.

When I ask student teachers at the start of the year why they have enrolled in the course, some replies are, 'I was not sure what else to do', 'My marks were not good enough to get into my first choice' and 'I have decided to change professions because I have children and I want to work 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. and have school holidays'. Quite frankly these are not the people we want becoming teachers.

I think also that tertiary institutions need to be more selective when choosing prospective students. They need to look at more than equivalent national tertiary entrance rank (ENTER) scores or academic transcripts. Perhaps, as other people have stated, we need to interview students as other courses do because teachers need to possess a passion, values, excellent social and communication skills, literacy skills and social awareness. I believe nous, personality, flexibility and a sense of humour are big factors in teacher effectiveness.

According to the committee's terms of reference, it is investigating how to support the increase of mature-age entrants from other professions. I would honestly question this approach. Over the years I have worked with over 300 student teachers and there have been a select few mature-age students who have entered teaching for philosophical reasons who have had the right attributes and have made great teachers.

I think we need to be honest. Are we likely to attract mature-age entrants from other professions on the current salary scale? If so, is it because they were not successful in their previous career? Do we really want to attract these people to the teaching profession?

Similarly, there has been talk recently about offering male scholarships for teaching so that we have more male role models in schools. I would say that if you are going to offer scholarships, fine, but offer them to males and females because the bottom line is we want excellent teachers to enter the profession who have a passion and a talent for what they are doing. These people will be the best role models for students, regardless of whether they are male or female.

In terms of different teacher training courses, I feel that the one-year graduate diploma of education can prepare the right students for teaching just as well as the four-year bachelor of education. I do have concerns, however, about some pre-service training courses being completed by distance education. These courses involve textbook work and assignments. I have yet to understand how students can learn teaching pedagogy in this current mode. I think that students learn best by observing teachers who model excellent teaching practice. Tertiary institutions should employ academics as well as practising teachers who are based in schools, so that pedagogy is linked to real-life, day-to-day experiences.

Whilst teaching content is important as it helps us to have a good understanding of subject matter to explain concepts to our students, I believe that practicum time is the key factor in effective teacher training. I believe that student teachers should be based in schools more often, either through school-based programs with tertiary links or internships.

In the past there have been programs that were extremely successful. At Frankston High School we used to run a school-based program for diploma of education students in conjunction with Monash University where students were based in the school for a term and were regularly visited by lecturers who also ran sessions at the school. The students who were involved in this program definitely benefited from this experiential learning and developed outstanding skills. Unfortunately, this program was stopped — I think in the early 1980s — because of lack of funding to pay school supervisors.

Internships, which include a wage, would definitely attract student teachers, and possibly mature-aged students, into the profession. A good example of where schools have developed close links with business and industry in a similar type of program is the AFL traineeship program. This program has proven to be successful in our school. Currently we have two trainees who were year 12 students last year. The contribution they make to the school and the support they give to our teaching staff is enormous. Interestingly many of our former trainees have chosen to move into the field of education, even though this is not what the program is about or what the trainees had envisaged before working at the school. I think by having internships, they will discover whether teaching is the profession for them. However, I think this will only be successful by matching them with highly effective teachers who are up to date with current practice.

In regards to skills and knowledge required of teachers in the 21st century, there is no doubt that ICT training is crucial, as well as a good understanding of the nature of learning and how to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning.

I would also argue that teachers need to be prepared to handle social interactions and issues in our ever-changing society. There is no doubt that more and more pressures and demands are being placed on teachers due to the changing nature of family structures and relationships. In some ways school can be the most stable part of a

student's life. Teachers need strategies to enhance the interaction between themselves, parents, students and the community.

Finally, if we are serious about making improvements to pre-service teacher training courses, we need to dramatically increase the funding that is given to tertiary institutions and schools. It is also absolutely essential that you as politicians, the community, the media and teachers themselves talk up the profession of teaching. We need to value our teachers and the wonderful job they do in the community. By doing this hopefully we will attract more of the right people, both males and females, recent graduates and mature-age students, into the extremely rewarding and wonderful profession of teaching. Thank you.

The CHAIR — I thank all the presenters today. We have been taking notes, and Hansard has been working away. I thought I would open it up to comments on the presentations we have heard from others. We have a technical difficulty; we are just getting around this — this is the first time. The Hansard microphone is there, so if I can ask people to come up, state your name and where you are from and perhaps make a comment at the microphone or around there, it will help with our recording of this. Gabrielle, our researcher, will give you a piece of paper after to get your contact details.

The Hansard proof copies will be sent to each of the presenters in the next couple of weeks — probably within 10 to 14 days — depending on the workload of Hansard, and the transcripts will then appear on the Education and Training Committee's web site if you would like to look at and refer to them. That is probably two weeks to be safe, it might be quicker, but I am not sure. Can I have any comments or further feedback before I open up the session to questions?

Mr COLLINS — I will pick up a point from Karen Wade about payment — that is, that we need the good teachers to be made available to pick up the kids who are coming through in the pre-service training, so you do have your better staff. At the moment we have a structure where it is very difficult to pay teachers who are our greeting teachers and above, and that is an important point. How do we encourage those people to make the time in an already busy work day to make sure they can offer the best possible advice and role modelling to our pre-service trainees in the schools?

Ms MUNT — I was talking at lunchtime with a couple of the teachers here who suggested that it might not be just a remuneration package that would help with that, but making time available in their day. Would that be correct or not?

Mr COLLINS — Absolutely. Time is the issue for us in schools. When you consider that whenever there is a social ill, the response is often, 'We'll get the schools to fix that', and the spaghetti plate is already fairly full. Another issue is money. To get release requires money so you can free up a teacher from their teaching load and take effective supervision of a trainee teacher.

Ms O'CONNELL — I am Pat O'Connell from the Frankston–Mornington Peninsula Local Learning and Employment Network. The other sectors often involved alongside schools are the community organisations and non-government organisations — the welfare agencies and so on. I think it is fairly critical that young people in training make the connections with how these things work within a community, because virtually every school in the Frankston–Mornington Peninsula area is involved in one way or another with one of these agencies with some of their students.

The other thing I would like to say in relation to attracting people from other industries into teaching is that we make an assumption that they will necessarily take a drop in pay. Some of them will not if they are coming from trade areas. But a more important issue is that those who will, will take drops in pay because the Victorian Institute of Teaching does not necessarily recognise some of the qualifications or some of the prior acquired skills that those people hold. The institute recognises the teaching that people have done at a technical and further education college, but it may not recognise teaching that people have done with a private, registered training organisation.

For example, in establishments like the Ford Motor Company, the company itself is a private, registered training organisation and it works under the same system as TAFE, but these people may not get any recognition for their teaching there whereas they would get it from TAFE. It is just one of those silly anomalies which is holding back people with maybe four or five years experience in teaching groups of young apprentices and so on. That needs to be addressed fairly quickly.

Mr ZYNGIER — I am David Zyngier, a lecturer in the faculty of education at Monash University. Just as a precursor introduction, I am also the Cameron who was talked about earlier. I had to apply three times before I was accepted into a diploma of education course in 1980. I went on to become quite a successful secondary school teacher and a principal.

We heard a lot about too much theory, yet as Glen told us, if we are to know how young people tick we can only know that by theory. We need to know how we are to know. This whole artificial divide between theory and practice is something that we hear all the time, 'Just tell me how to do it', but if that is all we did in teacher education — if we taught our students how to do it — all that we will be telling them is how we once did it in a past that is totally irrelevant to today and of course irrelevant to the futures of the young people who are going to be in schools in the next 10 or 15 years.

Therefore, I would like to suggest that a lot of the work that we do in teacher education is at the cutting edge. I will take the example that we have heard time and time again about pedagogy. If you were to ask the primary school and secondary school teachers what the word 'pedagogy' meant they may be scratching their head, yet we, who are at the coalface teaching teachers, are teaching about pedagogy, about what it actually means. Kate Taylor talked about productive pedagogies. Again, that is a concept that is probably alien to 95 per cent of all teachers currently in front of our students. Where are people learning about productive pedagogies — authentic assessment? They are learning it at the teacher training institutions through a nexus of theory and practice. That is my first point. I do not think that we should discard the baby with the bath water. If we do, we are going to end up reproducing very bad teaching pedagogy.

Secondly, about the selection of candidates, it would be difficult to interview every candidate who applied. We had 800 applicants for our primary graduate diploma of education — 800 applicants! We had 90 positions. If we were to interview those 800 candidates — and I did my maths although it is pretty shonky — it would have taken 50 days, without a break, to give each candidate a half-hour interview. Go and find that time. It is not possible. There may be better ways of doing it, but I would like to suggest that if we were to apply Marion's selection criteria then we would be preventing some of the best teachers possible, including Cameron and myself, from ever entering the teaching profession because these things develop over time.

I am privileged to work with a grade 3 primary school teacher from Chelsea Primary School, and she tells our students that it has taken her 10 years in the classroom before she has found her feet about what it means to be a teacher. Therefore, I think it is more important for the Marion Heales, the teachers and the selection panels in the schools to decide on the basis of what they get at the end of the process. We do not do it in the law, we do not do it in commerce, we do not do it in medicine — we let them finish their course and then go out and apply for a job and let the final job application be the telling point.

The second-last point I would like to make is that I heard a lot of generalisation here. I would hate the committee to go away thinking that on the basis of three graduates who are working here — and they are excellent graduates — that that is the sum total of the education courses that are being delivered around the state of Victoria. I would like to suggest that there is a great variety as there is a great variety of teachers who are teaching at this school in its 143 staff. Not all of them are the very, very best and we would like some of them to improve, or as Don said, some of them to perhaps move out.

Finally, although I appreciate the comments from Ray from Overport Primary School about the need to have more male role models and more male teachers, I would like to say that as a male I find that insulting to every female teacher who ever taught me, every female who has taught my children and taught your children and taught in the past. Teaching has been — especially in primary school, but also in secondary school — a female profession. The suggestion that females cannot do what males do is an insult to them. As I tell my students — I am sorry for the crassness and block your ears, kids — it is not what is between your legs but what is between your ears that counts.

Mr MIRABELLA — My name is Tim Mirabella. I am no longer actively teaching but I hope the committee will get to know my name quite well in the coming weeks and months. I have already lodged a detailed written submission with the committee, which I believe will have quite a bearing on future teacher training.

I am a retired primary school teacher and principal. I had a fairly successful career, for most of which I was involved with training students from Burwood and Coburg teachers colleges. For half of my career I taught in disadvantaged schools in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. In addition to being a former student of Frankston

High School my one claim to fame is that I once enjoyed my 15 minutes of fame. This came about when I was chosen to become the 1981 Victorian Teacher of the Year, which according to the citation was for inspiring leadership and for developing a highly successful program in literacy and numeracy; a feat that I would like to stress was achieved in an inner-suburban, disadvantaged school during my first tenure as a principal.

At that time the award was intended by the Victorian government to recognise outstanding contributions to education. It continues to be a matter of great regret to me that our education system was not permitted to take advantage of my contribution. It remains, however, a matter of public record and part of the history of education in Victoria that my unique curriculum approach resulted in a school review finding that the standard of literacy throughout the whole school was exceptionally high. None of this minimum acceptable standards stuff — exceptionally high standards of literacy throughout a school that had an almost 60 per cent migrant population. I have not come here to boast about that; I have come to tell you as a committee that I am still willing and able to offer that leadership, in spite of having been sidelined by coronary illness 20 years ago. I feel I must make this offer because it appears that no-one else is able to. Many have tried and all have failed to overcome the literacy and learning problems that bedevil our system of education and every other system of education. That is because everyone continues to look in the wrong direction. Everyone is looking at teachers as being the source of the problem and seeing that the solution to the problem will be training better teachers, having more highly qualified teachers. But that is not where the problem lies. I have set this out in my detailed submission, because I want to point education, in total, in the right direction.

We have heard today mostly about secondary schools, and I do wonder what on earth is happening for primary schools. I have already set the mechanisms in place to help out here — I have done it at my own volition, at my own expense — and I have set up a research study which has been approved by the research section of the education department. The study will be conducted in conjunction with Victoria University. When you come to understand what I am doing and how it will impact on teacher education, I hope you will give me your support and encouragement. You might even consider helping me by arranging funding for my project.

The CHAIR — Thank you. I might ask for some questions; we have a bit more time. We have a lot of students and I might direct questions to some of those students. We have heard today from one student a very eloquent summary of what is important. Can we have some comments from the students about what features of teaching that they find produce the best outcomes in terms of learning. What do you think is good about teaching — that all teachers should have to get an outcome — or is it different with different teachers? Who would like to have a punt at that? What do you think makes a great teacher?

Ms DONALDSON — My name is Lucy Donaldson and I am one of the senior students at Frankston High School. I believe, and I am sure a lot of secondary students believe, that a good teacher is one who inspires you to achieve your best. I know that a lot of teachers throughout my schooling always told me that I had a lot of potential and inspired me to achieve it; to achieve the very best I could. Being at Frankston High School has taught me to do that. I have had many different teachers, young and old, from both sexes, and they have all approached teaching very differently. The very best teachers are the teachers who inspire you and draw out your best qualities in relation to how you learn, and teach you how to put those qualities into practice. The teachers who are the best are those who have the personal qualities that give them the ability to do that; to recognise your potential, draw it out and help you to achieve your best.

The CHAIR — What about technology and computers? We have heard a lot about computers today; about the importance of having technology in the classroom, and how it works. Do you find that computers are used widely; are a single subject; or are they integrated in what you do; or even: is the level of computer studies you do in schools at the level you have achieved at home? Would you like to comment on that?

Ms DONALDSON — I think technology has certainly grown and advanced very rapidly in the past years with mobile phones and everything; computers; the Internet. At Frankston High School we have a lot of computers and our resources are very wide. Technology resources are very good in schools in the Frankston community. I think that at a curriculum level computers are integrated into the system with a laptop program. I was not personally in a laptop program.

The CHAIR — What is that? Tell me about it.

Ms DONALDSON — I am not sure I am the best advocate for that.

Ms HOOD — I am Tessa Hood. I am one of the senior students at Frankston High School. I am not a very technical person and I was never very technically minded through primary school. Then when I came to Frankston High School I was involved in its laptop program. This meant that for pretty much all of our subjects, through years 7 and 8 mainly, we used our laptops. Instead of having a basic text book — we would still sometimes have text books and we would have exercise books to write in — a lot of what we learned was done through computers. Instead of having a big book, you would have it on the computer, so you would go on there.

Although I hated it a lot of times because I am not technical, and I did not want to learn what I was learning, I really appreciate now that I did do that that because it is a really important thing: that everyone knows how to use computers. If I had not learnt that in years 7 and 8 as I did, I do not think I would ever have learnt it because I would not have had the motivation to go and do it myself because I did not want to. Now I am involved in a lot of media stuff, doing filming and editing and things like that which might not sound that important, but to me it is very important. If I did not have the basic computer skills that I have learned in years 7 and 8 I would not be doing what I am doing now, and it is something that I am looking into in the future as well.

What this school has done with the computers has been really important to me, as I know that it has been to a lot of other people. It creates a lot of other ways of learning. My sister is in year 7 at the moment. Instead of getting chapter summaries and things like that to do at home she will be given a web site to go on and to play on an interactive web site program to learn a language or to learn geography. She is loving it. It is really good how it is all advancing.

The CHAIR — To you and other students how important is the technology knowledge of your teacher, not just your computer teacher, and their ability to use computers in a creative way? How important is that to teaching? Is it important as a teacher that empathises or really tries to help you? How would you rate that?

Ms HOOD — Obviously the empathising teacher and a compassionate person is always important, and that is the first thing that they have to be able to do, but to be technically minded and have the ability to use computers and teach us is also very important. If they do not have the ability then we are not going to be able to learn it. Their personal qualities are the most important thing, because they are not going to be able to get their teaching across to us if they do not have them, but the technology side of it is very important.

Ms MUNT — Is the laptop program part of an accelerated learning program, as I know that it is, for instance, at Mordialloc Secondary College; or is it a general program for the entire school population?

Mr SMITH — It is not a general program for the entire school population, because we would not be able to offer it to the entire school population. The laptops are parent funded, therefore at the start of year 7 we run an information session down in the hall where usually about 400 people attend. It is an option that parents have at the start of the year 7 whether they want their child to be in a laptop class or a non-laptop class. That provides our students with a whole range of experiences in a laptop class. It also frees up a lot of technology for those students who are not in a laptop program, because a lot of what we do here is very technological and, as Tessa said, she has obviously gained a hell of a lot of skills from it.

I also want to follow up on a point that Tessa made and question you asked about technological teachers. The best teachers of technology do not have to be technological; they need to be taught how to teach and learn the technology. Get a good teacher and put them in a classroom of technology, you will get outcomes. Get a bad teacher who is technological and put them in a classroom of technology, you will not get student outcomes. The important thing is that we go to universities and say, 'Let's get these great teachers, these great people' and hopefully there can be some changes to the selection processes so we can get those people. Then, 'Let's skill them up in the use of technology — not to use Excel but to teach and learn to use Excel — so that we can improve our student outcomes', because that is what it is all about. You do not have to know how to use a program until it is real for you and until you need to actually implement it into the classroom. It is the teaching and learning of technology that should be given more focus not the technology itself.

The CHAIR — I turn to the benefits and importance of mentoring for young teachers, or internship or whatever it is called. If there were more practicum time in schools would mentoring still be important? I think David raised this issue. We have two issues. One is that notwithstanding that a number of people have said mentoring, you come out of teachers college, you go straight to the classroom and it is a kind of hard, cold shower of reality of being a full-time teacher; perhaps a mentoring period or internship where you ease yourself in a bit

more than you have. Would that still be necessary if you had a longer practicum period — that is, if you spent more time in the school during your four-year training?

Mr LYONS — The important point is that you are spending time at the school that you are going to work in. In your teaching rounds, and while it is valuable that you see a whole range of different educational scenarios, the best part about the internship is that you spend a prolonged period of time in the place where you are going to work. You learn the patterns of the school and you get an opportunity to build a relationship with students and staff so that when you do start working you do the best possible job.

Ms MUNT — We were talking at lunch and saying that the mentors that are chosen should be chosen by the school, because the school would know which teachers would be best placed to do that job and do it effectively. Is that correct?

Mr LYONS — It certainly is, and it comes back to the selection of teachers — the right personality and the right personal qualities. Obviously if you are a good teacher and you have a good classroom setting the chances are you are going to be able to mentor that student or a student teacher in a positive manner as well. There is a huge array of staff at this school who, I know, would make fantastic mentors. We have a system in place now that a graduate teacher does get a mentor, but that normally is only helpful outside of the classroom. So it is fine for Travis to be my mentor, and he is there whenever I need him outside of the classroom, but everyone knows that teaching is a very isolating profession — you are in the classroom, you have got 26 kids in there and what you do has to work.

The CHAIR — Forty minutes?

Mr LYONS — That is right; it can be a nightmare. A number of graduates find the first week of class terrifying, because you are in there by yourself.

The CHAIR — I want to get back to the cost of practicum, which is the issue that has been raised at a number of hearings. It has been put that whilst it has been traditional that supervising teachers receive an additional payment, it has been put to us by other groups that what is needed is for the profession to accept a role in developing the next work force and that the payment system for supervising teachers needs to change to some other role. Janice and I referred to it before in terms of time or something like that. Those of you who are teachers or principals here, what do you think about the concept of scrapping the payment and building it in as part of a teacher's responsibility to the work force in whichever you wish, so that teacher trainees can spend more time in schools. What is your response? Would you still get teachers being supervising teachers or would it make the situation difficult?

Ms WADE — I do not think so. At the moment we are finding it very hard to place student teachers already. Many schools will not take them, because staff feel that there is a restriction of time with the content of work they have to get through et cetera. I do not think that that is the way to go. It could be in time release; many teachers would probably accept time release, but again that is going to need funding. I do not think it can be something that you just add on to teachers.

The CHAIR — We do have leading teachers who have different jobs and responsibilities. I cannot quite get around why supervising a trainee teacher is different to the sort of responsibilities that leading teachers or senior teachers have, whether it be bus programs or whatever. I cannot see why that is different to those others, and it may be a part of a promotional package.

Ms WADE — A lot of your best teachers currently are the ones in leadership positions, basically because there is nowhere else to go. For many years teachers have been trying to get rewarded for excellence in the classroom, but in all honesty to get that progression we go to leadership positions and we get taken out of the classroom. They are the sort of people that you probably want to mentor others, but they have other responsibilities.

Mr SMITH — I just want to follow up on that. I agree and think that mentoring a student teacher would be a role that people would take on, but for me to take that on as a leading teacher position means that the director of computing position goes out the window. So we are not just using leading teachers in schools now doing arbitrary jobs that are not necessary — every leading teacher position in this school is necessary, we think, for our students to achieve the outcomes they achieve. I think it would be fine if we had leading teachers who were in charge of mentoring student teachers, and I think there would be a lot of us who would take that role with both

hands and go, 'This is fantastic. I can actually have an impact on the next generation of teachers here', but at what expense to the rest of the school? Do we take out the literacy and numeracy coordinator? They are a leading teacher, let us scrap them and put them in charge of a student teacher. Let us take out the person who is head of sport and put them in charge of a teacher. It always comes down to funding. We are at such a level at the moment where we cannot fit anymore in; every teacher will tell you that. We cannot do anymore or we are all going to leave the profession and go elsewhere.

Mr PYMAN — One of the points I raised earlier was the teaching profession taking charge of its own image. I just draw parallels between the structures that I have had experience with — it is not a simplistic thing, I know, in relation to work load and all that sort of thing — and in respect to incremental payments for incremental work, that is not consistent with what I view as a professional organisation. A professional does a wide range of things as a professional person without relying on an extra $50 a week to do this and $20 a week to do that. I know there are huge pressures on teachers to do lots of different things, and it is a very complex issue, but one of the issues in terms of raising the prestige of the teaching profession is for it to be structured so we are not looking at incremental payments for every additional duty that is required. That is no reflection on teachers wanting those payments, but the salary structure, the professional structure, has to be such that the community and others view it as that. For example, if I am with the engineering profession I do not get any extra money for mentoring a young graduate each year who comes into my area; it is part of what I do.

Mr JOHNSTON — My name is Murray Johnston. I am the principal at Western Port Secondary College. My observation would be that the payment to teachers for mentoring or taking a graduate under their wing or providing supervision of a student teacher is really a token acknowledgment of a job they are undertaking rather than a fee for an hourly rate. If you say mentoring or supervising a student teacher and look at the time involved in that — how long is a piece of string? You are talking about unique individuals all with unique backgrounds and baggage that you have to deal with. For many of them, coming into the profession dead cold and taking on board what David was saying about the wealth of information and the theoretical background that is needed and his concept of marrying that with the practicalities of being in a workplace, when they come and hit the school I as principal want them performing pretty well straightaway — they have to hit the deck running because it comes back to cost. If I have to outlay lots of money to allow people to provide supervision to teachers — mentoring teachers or beginning teachers — that comes out of my global budget; it comes at a cost. It comes at the cost of painting the walls or putting ICT hardware into classrooms or providing extra programs and activities for our students. My school is a relatively disadvantaged school socially and is an area that has undergone very hard times in previous years. For me I really have to balance then whether I would be saying I am going to take an amount of time out of my teaching time and devote that to providing mentoring or supervision at the cost of providing these other programs.

Ms MUNT — However, is it not true with the global budgets that the mix of teachers — with new teachers, middle-range experience teachers and very experienced teachers — their salaries are different and there is a different funding arrangement? I know that principals generally like to employ very new teachers because they are relatively cheap and less of a drain on the budget. Could that be offset in some way with the cost of mentoring?

Mr JOHNSTON — My view on that is I want to employ people who are passionate about teaching regardless of age and experience. If I employ a graduate teacher it is because they are the best candidate and the most passionate. I have just employed somebody on a contract for the rest of the year. He is a guy over 55 who is passionate about his teaching, and I am paying him at the highest rate. So I take on board what you are saying, but we are after passionate people. Whilst you can make some savings within your global budget to do that, if you look at my school for an example, it is 30 years old and we are spending megadollars just trying to maintain the physical fabric of the school. So if there were any savings within the global budget it would be spent on the fabric of the school and extra staffing to support programs.

The CHAIR — Okay. Was there someone else who wanted to make a final comment?

Ms ITALIANO — I am Maria Italiano from Heatherhill Secondary College. A point of clarification, Steve: when you were asking about funding, I think there is a real issue for schools about funding a mentoring program. I think mentoring is critical to making teachers, who come in with lots of issues, more comfortable with their jobs. I think when a teacher first comes in they may have the theory that David was alluding to and they may have some of the skills that — David? — was talking about, but they are still facing a local community with local issues, with lots of diversity.

For example, at the school that I teach in there are about 38 cultures represented with different needs, and a low socioeconomic setting. We have teachers coming in with the passion and the desire, and you would think that they would survive in their first year of teaching, but they do not if they do not have the mentoring, so mentoring is critical to their success. A lot of them would perhaps leave if someone did not take them under their wing.

I think the other thing you also need to understand is that teachers are overloaded. There is a lot of innovation; there is a great demand on teachers to train in ICT. I am a teacher of English. I taught English for 20 years, and I re-invented myself by taking on IT in 1999. That was an enormous learning curve, and it took up a lot of time. I am now trying, as professional development leader and student engagement leader, to try and turn that around in the classroom and get teachers to learn the ICT skills and apply them in a practical setting. Teachers are saying to me, 'You are asking us to do too much'. They still come and they still do, but they are overloaded. They have all these myriad of issues to deal with, and then you have the young teachers who are faced with that, and what do you do? You need to mentor them or they will walk away. So we do face a critical issue, and principals need to fund the time of their teachers to do that. Your suggestion was to not pay the teacher — —

The CHAIR — No, I was posing a query, not making a suggestion.

Ms ITALIANO — Well, perhaps. I thought the point of clarification would be: perhaps do not pay the individual teacher — but, as Kate suggests, provide time release — but give the money to the school and target it for that particular program.

The CHAIR — Thank you. That concludes the time we have available. What do you say: every solution poses 10 questions, and we have got a lot of questions here which we will go on and keep asking until we can hopefully get some clarity and what you would think are solutions.

I would like to thank you all for coming. It has been terrific for us — probably one of the more valuable days we have had. We are early into this inquiry — we will be going through a fair bit more — so what you have done is given us a broad cross-section that helps us question and immerse ourselves in the research we have.

I would like to particularly thank Marion and the students and staff at Frankston high here for putting this on. It is much appreciated. I know it takes a lot of time out of your schedule, your study, your teaching preparation and your administration, but I hope it has been worth while to you all. I thank all the other schools and groups that have come here and given evidence today and spoken to us. I would also like to thank Alistair Harkness, the local member, who had to go to another appointment — I think he is lobbying to get some funding for a facility here in Frankston!

Finally, I would like to say that if you have further comment or anything you would like to state that you do not think we have got today, we have a web site or you can telephone.. The web site is at Parliament at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/etc/ — Education and Training Committee — or pick up the phone to us on 9651 8309. We would be very grateful for any input you have. Thank you very much. I declare this meeting of the Victorian Parliamentary Education and Training Committee closed.

Committee adjourned.